SCHOOL GOVERNANCE:
PHASES, PARTICIPATION AND PARADOXES

Lesley Irene Payne 2004

This dissertation is a report of an investigation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Murdoch University
March 2004
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which had not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Signed

Murdoch University

March 2004
ABSTRACT

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: PHASES, PARTICIPATION AND PARADOXES

This research analyses the governance structures and processes of thirteen independent primary schools in Perth, and one state primary school in Western Australia termed an ‘alternative’ or ‘lighthouse’ school. More in-depth case studies were undertaken at five sites with participants from different time periods. All the schools had a school council or board since their foundations and notably all schools had their origins in the period of the alternative school and community empowerment movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

In an era of market reform and the corporatisation of schools, the critical areas of focus for this research were: how community expectations and school identity were maintained within council-governed schools; how democratic imperatives compete with professionalism and school improvement issues; and how schools confront dilemmas of governance. Three frameworks, Phases of Development, Community Empowerment and Dilemmas, were employed as useful means to discuss school governance. The results revealed changes in governance over time. Schools began to envisage themselves less as communities and more as businesses. The emphasis was away from parent involvement and towards efficiency and commercial practices. Tensions and dilemmas arose out of these changes.
The thesis concluded that it was not the structures or individuals that were crucial in governance processes but the playing out of particular tensions and dilemmas. Principals and councils have to acknowledge the dilemmas that arise from competing values systems and make choices based on a clear understanding of these dilemmas.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to those principals, board members and others who voluntarily participated in this research. They generously gave of their time and experiences with enthusiasm and candour. Without them this study would not be what it is.

Special thanks also go to my supervisors, James Bell and Jan Currie, for their continuous support and encouragement, for their unflagging reading and re-readings of my work, and for their unfailing belief that I was doing something worthwhile. Also thanks to Anna Alderson and Gayle Ward for their feedback and affirmation of my work.

Finally thank you to my husband Tjark who not only took most of the personal burden at home but also gave valuable technical support.
## CONTENTS

Abstract ......................................................................................................................................................... iii

Tables ............................................................................................................................................................. xi

Figures ......................................................................................................................................................... xiii

Chapter 1 ........................................................................................................................................................ 1

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY .............................................................................................. 1

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1

Identifying a Paradigm .......................................................................................................................... 5

Aims and Scope of the Research ........................................................................................................... 8

Key Terms ..........................................................................................................................................................8

Scope of the Study ...........................................................................................................................................12

Overview of the Thesis .............................................................................................................................. 16

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 19

Chapter 2 ...................................................................................................................................................... 20

CRITICAL HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE .......................... 20

Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 20

Historical Context of Alternative Educational Philosophies ........................................................................21

Alternative School Movement in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s ...............................................................23

Political and Reform Context .............................................................................................................. 28

International Reforms .......................................................................................................................... 30

Australian Restructuring ....................................................................................................................... 36

Reform Issues ........................................................................................................................................... 41

Markets, School Choice and Empowerment .......................................................................................... 41

Public School/ Private School Divide .................................................................................................... 46

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 54
Chapter 6 .................................................................................................................................................... 156

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AS PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT ........................................................................... 156

Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 156

Operating structures .................................................................................................................................. 159
Board Composition and Stakeholder Representation ................................................................................. 159
Committees ..................................................................................................................................................... 166
Board Roles and Behaviours .......................................................................................................................... 168
Decision-Making ............................................................................................................................................ 177

Issues and Crises ........................................................................................................................................... 182
Pioneering Phase ............................................................................................................................................ 182
Present Phase .................................................................................................................................................. 185

Documents ............................................................................................................................................... 193
Pioneer Phase ................................................................................................................................................. 194
Present Phase .................................................................................................................................................. 197

Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................. 202

Chapter 7 .................................................................................................................................................... 207

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AS COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ................................................................ 207

Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 207

Community Empowerment ......................................................................................................................... 209
Community Participation: Assistance and Support ..................................................................................... 210
Community Voice: Consulting and Advising ............................................................................................... 214
Community Power and Decision-Making ...................................................................................................... 218

Sense of Community ................................................................................................................................... 227

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 231
Chapter 8.................................................................................................................................................... 234

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AS THE MANAGEMENT OF DILEMMAS............................................................. 234

Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 234

Dilemmas of Boundaries or Power ................................................................................................... 236

Boundaries or Roles .......................................................................................................................................237
Balancing Power: Autonomy or Expectations.........................................................................................241
Trust or Conflict.............................................................................................................................................247

Dilemmas of Form or Process .......................................................................................................... 253

Structures or Processes...................................................................................................................................253
Principal - Colleague, Communicator or Manager........................................................................................257

Dilemmas Of Identity or Community ................................................................................................ 265

Community Building or Business Principles.................................................................................................266
Heroic Leader or CEO ...................................................................................................................................273
Maintaining Identity or Meeting New Expectations .....................................................................................277

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 283

Chapter 9.................................................................................................................................................... 286

A QUESTION OF DISCOURSE..................................................................................................................... 286

PHASES, PARTICIPATION AND PARADOXES ................................................................. 286

Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 286

Phases and Formulae ...................................................................................................................................287
Participation and Power ................................................................................................................... 292

Paradoxes and Predicaments............................................................................................................ 297
Preferences and Propositions ........................................................................................................... 302

Implications....................................................................................................................................................303
Limitations of the Study.................................................................................................................................311
Future Research..............................................................................................................................................312

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 313
TABLES

TABLE 2.1: NUMBER OF NON-GOVERNMENTS SCHOOLS IN AUSTRALIA BY AFFILIATION ............................. 24

TABLE 2.2: NON-GOVERNMENT ENROLMENTS IN AUSTRALIA BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ENROLMENTS
SINCE 1955 ................................................................................................................................................... 47

TABLE 2.3: PERCENTAGE GROWTH OF TOTAL ENROLMENTS OF THE NON-GOVERNMENT AND
GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ENROLMENTS IN AUSTRALIA SINCE 1971.................................................. 48

TABLE 5.1: CYCLES OF BOARD BEHAVIOUR- KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF OPERATING PHASES (FIRST
CYCLE) .................................................................................................................................................. 117

TABLE 5.2: RESEARCH SITES - STAGE ONE .............................................................................................. 133

TABLE 5.3: CASE STUDY SITES- STAGES TWO AND THREE ................................................................. 136

TABLE 5.4: ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS ....................................................................................................... 144

TABLE 5.5: DOCUMENTS COLLECTED ................................................................................................. 145

TABLE 6.1: PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE .................................................... 158

TABLE 6.2: BOARD COMPOSITION & STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION AT FOUNDATION- CASE STUDY
SCHOOLS .................................................................................................................................................... 161

TABLE 6.3: PRESENT BOARD COMPOSITION AND STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION- CASE STUDY SCHOOLS
............................................................................................................................................................... 161

TABLE 6.4: PRESENT BOARD COMPOSITION AND STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION- OTHER RESEARCH
SCHOOLS ...................................................................................................................................................... 162

TABLE 6.5: PRESENT SUB-COMMITTEES AND PORTFOLIOS OF SCHOOL COUNCILS & BOARDS .......... 167

TABLE 6.6: PRESENT STRUCTURES AND GOVERNANCE ATTRIBUTES OF THE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS ...... 205
TABLE 7.1: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK ................................................................. 209

TABLE 7.2: GOVERNANCE—OPENNESS TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY ........................................... 217

TABLE 7.3: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK ............................................................. 232

TABLE 8.1: TENURE OF CURRENT PRINCIPALS OF STUDY SCHOOLS........................................... 259

TABLE 8.2: INAUGURAL PRINCIPALS TENURE (WHERE KNOWN)................................................ 259

TABLE 9.1: GOVERNANCE FEATURES OF THREE SELECTED SCHOOLS......................................... 291
FIGURES

Figures in the Main Text

FIGURE 5.1: POLITICAL SERVANT: 20TH CENTURY ................................................................. 123
FIGURE 5.2: EDUCATION’S COMMUNITY DEMOCRAT: 21ST CENTURY ................................ 123
FIGURE 5.3: DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS ...................................... 124
FIGURE 5.4: INITIAL CODING TREE .................................................................................. 149
FIGURE 5.5: SECOND VERSION OF THE MAIN CODING TREE .......................................... 150
FIGURE 5.6: FINAL MAIN CODING TREE ........................................................................... 151
FIGURE 6.1: SPECTRUM OF PARENT REPRESENTATION .................................................. 163
FIGURE 8.1: DILEMMAS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE ......................................................... 236

Appendix IV: Figures relate to Chapter 5

Figure 5.4: Initial Coding Tree 332

FIGURE 5.4A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION .................................................................... 332
FIGURE 5.5: SECOND VERSION OF THE MAIN CODING TREE ........................................... 333
FIGURE 5.5A: HISTORY CATEGORY WITH SUB-CATEGORIES AND BRANCHES ................. 334
FIGURE 5.5B: STRUCTURE CATEGORY WITH SUB-CATEGORIES AND BRANCHES ............ 335
FIGURE 5.5C: CONTEXT CATEGORY WITH SUB-CATEGORIES AND BRANCHES .............. 336
FIGURE 5.5D: TENSIONS CATEGORY WITH SUB-CATEGORIES .......................................... 337
Figure 5.6: Final Main Coding Tree................................................................. 338

Figure 5.7: Cycles or Phases in Governance Sub-Categories ......................... 338

Figure 5.7a: Pioneer Phase Sub-Category with Branches ............................... 339

Figure 5.7b: Super-Managing Phase of Governance with Sub-Categories and Branches .... 340

Figure 5.7c: Corporate Phase of Governance with Sub-Categories and Branches .......... 341

Figure 5.7d: Ratification Phase of Governance with Sub-Categories and Branches .......... 341